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RIVERSIDE ESSAYS

EDITED BY

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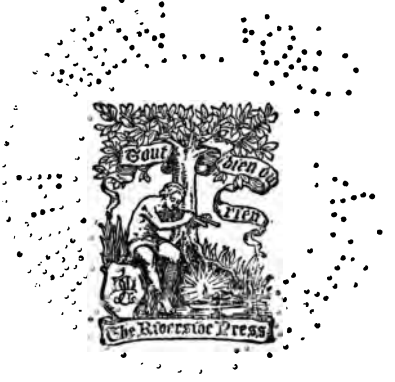
MOUNT HOLYOKE COLLEGE

The Riverside Literature Series

THE AMERICAN MIND
AND
AMERICAN IDEALISM

BY

BLISS PERRY
PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH LITERATURE
HARVARD UNIVERSITY



BOSTON NEW YORK CHICAGO
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
The Riverside Press Cambridge

R. L. S., 224

The Riverside Press
CAMBRIDGE . MASSACHUSETTS
U . S . A

Introduction

BY ADA L. F. SNELL

AN editorial in the *Springfield Republican* points out that the low standard of American writing is due, not to any lack of technical training, but to minds made flabby by "soft" courses and "lazy trifling with current fiction." Given minds of this sort, no amount of technical discipline will produce good writing; for, "important as it is, and to be encouraged in every way, formal instruction in the art of writing must always be secondary to education for wide culture and vigorous thinking. Good writing is mainly a matter of robust intellectual appetite and digestion employed upon matters that produce self-expression." With the hope that this intellectual spirit may, to some extent, be cultivated by the study of virile modern writers, these *Riverside Essays* have been selected. It is believed that the student may be more effectively trained in the art of writing by contact with

material, firmly thought out and masterfully expressed, than by rhetorical precept. Good reading will enable him to discover for himself those fundamental laws of form which every good writer obeys; and obeys because they simply formulate the mind's way of working when it works well. Beatrice says in the *Paradiso*, "All things whatsoever have order among themselves, and this is the form which makes the universe like to God." Form, then, in Dante's universe, as in writing, is order. And since no right sense of the significance of order can be developed by mere "extracts," the whole composition of a writer should be given the student for consideration. Only thus can he appreciate that "the workman hath in his heart a purpose." Moreover, the student who masters an essay in all its logical setting forth of an idea toughens his mind "to grapple with hard books and to get pleasure from conquering them whether he enjoys them or not." And by means of this grappling "his intelligence can be got actively at work striking out ideas and setting them in order." With the twofold purpose, therefore, of developing in the student through good reading both a sense of form and also

mental power, the material in the *Riverside Essays* has been selected.

The first number, here presented, is by Bliss Perry, professor of English Literature at Harvard. Professor Perry's environment and training have been almost wholly academic. He was born in the college town of Williamstown, and is the son of a professor. A graduate of Williams College, he studied further at the universities of Berlin and Strassburg. Professor Perry taught English at Williams and Princeton, was for several years editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*, and in 1909 was Harvard lecturer at the University of Paris. Professor Perry's writing is also largely academic in spirit. *A Study of Prose Fiction* is known to all students. *The Amateur Spirit* delightfully describes the life of a college professor, and tells of such gentle academic pastimes as fishing with a worm. The *Park Street Papers*, and indeed all of Professor Perry's writing, is characterized by a genial scholarship. His latest book, *The American Mind*, from which the two essays here reprinted are chosen, is plainly the result of collegiate pursuits. The lectures which constitute the volume are, as the author states in the pre-

face, the E. T. Earl Lectures for 1912 at the Pacific Theological Seminary, Berkeley, California.

The purpose of *The American Mind* is to define and interpret American literature as it reflects the characteristic qualities of the American. In his first lecture, *Race, Nation, and Book*, Professor Perry declares that dogmatic brandings of racial and national traits on a national literature are to be made with reservations. For example, Keats belongs to no time and Edgar Allan Poe to no place. The author further questions the existence of a truly national art anywhere; that is, an art "which conveys a trustworthy and adequate expression of the national temper as a whole." All our deductions concerning Japan, based upon the Japanese vases and prints, were "smashed to pieces by the Russo-Japanese War." That literature does not express the character of a nation is due to the fact that such expression requires a knowledge of form such as is possessed only by the poet. Lacking a poet, racial experience and national emotions are unrecorded. The scholars of the Renaissance, recognizing this fact, avowed they needed schoolmasters, and were in the right; for

" no one can paint or compose by nature. One must slowly master an art of expression." Literature demands " not merely personal distinction and power, not merely some uncommon height or depth of capacity and insight, but a purely artistic training, which in the very nature of the case is rare." A nation, therefore, is not necessarily without ideas and emotions simply because no poet has arisen to voice them in song. Notwithstanding this, in the literature which a nation has produced, the task of the critic is to find the national bent of mind. This Professor Perry attempts to do in *The American Mind*, and by such an analysis prepares the reader to understand the elements which make a book truly American.

Briefly summarized, the characteristics of the American are belief in the institutions of his country, confidence in his powers, recklessness, love of oratory, and wonderful energy. " We are a nation of immigrants, a digging, hewing, building, breeding, bettering race, of mixed blood and varying creeds, but of fundamental faith in the wages of going on; a race compounded of materials crude but potent; raw, but with blood that is red and bones that are

big; a race that is accomplishing its vital tasks, and, little by little, transmuting brute forces and material energies into the finer play of the spirit." The most characteristic attitude of the American mind is idealism. Individualism, radicalism, and public spirit are other qualities, but the dominating one, including the "ideal passions of patriotism, of liberty, of loyalty to home and section, of humanitarian and missionary effort," is idealism.

In the next lecture, *American Idealism*, Professor Perry defines, with a view which includes the varying individualities of our states, the ideals of the Americans and the mirroring of these in our literature. The material, therefore, affords the student a basis for the estimate of the older writers, and furnishes a point of departure for the judgment and interpretation of present-day literary output. Can the student, for instance, find evidences of the old ideals in the slender volumes of recent poetry? Is he able to trace in the prose and poetry of to-day a glimmer of "the new idealism which has come with the twentieth century: ethical, municipal, industrial, and artistic movements which are full of promise for the higher life of the country, but

which have not yet had time to express themselves adequately in literature"?

The lecture, moreover, dealing as it does with the school, meeting-house, town, and home as the old "Reverences" which inspired our poets, is highly suggestive. Our college students, gathering in the classroom from such varying quarters, from sterile New England farms and isolated hill-towns, from our vivid cities east and west, bring with them a wealth of experience; and still, as in the by-gone days, the warmest, deepest feelings are allied with church and school, with town and home. On these subjects the student writes most persuasively. That he treats them, in general, imaginatively and effectively is probably due to the fact that the mere going away from home has engendered a certain remoteness of spirit with reference to them; already they lie, as Emerson says, "like fair pictures in the air." These age-old objects of reverence are then still rich as literary subject-matter.[1]

A study of Professor Perry's method of pre-

[1] That even in these days the meeting-house may inspire delicate if not profound writing is evidenced by the delightful little sketch in the November, 1912, number of the *Atlantic Monthly*, entitled "The Order of Morning Service."

senting his material will also be of value to the student. Quiet humor, breadth of literary and national outlook, and significant illustration vitalize and humanize the abstract theme. Notwithstanding the numerous allusions, anecdotes, and definitions, the whole is simple, since it is fused into organic oneness by that quality of style which Pater trenchently describes as Mind. The readily perceived design, the result of Mind, gives strength to the construction, and meaning to the decoration; and according to Ruskin these two qualities constitute "the two virtues of architecture, its strength, or good construction, and its beauty, or good decoration." For structure, for decoration, then, as well as for other technical aspects, the student, interested in the art of expression, will find the lecture on *American Idealism* valuable aid in the forming of his own method of work.

The remaining lectures of the volume are *Romance and Reaction*, *Humor and Satire*, and *Individualism and Fellowship*. Each, defining further the American mind, sets forth the qualities which are American in our literature. The last lecture deals with the early self-seeking of the American and the later sense of fellowship.

The last paragraph sounds a hopeful note, and illustrates that faith and that spirit of idealism which Professor Perry believes to characterize the American nation. The volume closes with these words: "We, too, shall outgrow in time our questioning, our self-analysis, our futile comparison of ourselves with other nations, our self-conscious study of our own national character. We shall not forget the distinction between 'each' and 'all,' but 'all' will increasingly be placed at the service of 'each.' With fellowship based upon individualism, and with individualism ever leading to fellowship, America will perform its vital tasks, and its literature will be the unconscious and beautiful utterance of its inner life."

The American Mind

THE origin of the phrase, "the American mind," was political. Shortly after the middle of the eighteenth century, there began to be a distinctly American way of regarding the debatable question of British Imperial control. During the period of the Stamp Act agitation our colonial-bred politicians and statesmen made the discovery that there was a mode of thinking and feeling which was native — or had by that time become a second nature — to all the colonists. Jefferson, for example, employs those resonant and useful words "the American mind" to indicate that throughout the American colonies an essential unity of opinion had been developed as regards the chief political question of the day.

It is one of the most striking characteristics of the present United States that this instinct of political unity should have endured, triumphing

over every temporary motive of division. The inhabitants of the United States belong to a single political type. There is scarcely a newsstand in any country of Continental Europe where one may not purchase a newspaper openly or secretly opposed to the government, — not merely attacking an unpopular administration or minister or ruler, — but desiring and plotting the overthrow of the entire political system of the country. It is very difficult to find such a newspaper anywhere in the United States. I myself have never seen one. The opening sentence of President Butler's admirable little book, *The American as He Is*, originally delivered as lectures before the University of Copenhagen, runs as follows:

"The most impressive fact in American life is the substantial unity of view in regard to the fundamental questions of government and of conduct among a population so large, distributed over an area so wide, recruited from sources so many and so diverse, living under conditions so widely different."

But the American type of mind is evident in many other fields than that of politics. The stimulating book from which I have just

quoted, attempts in its closing paragraph, after touching upon the more salient features of our national activity, to define the typical American in these words: —

"The typical American is he who, whether rich or poor, whether dwelling in the North, South, East, or West, whether scholar, professional man, merchant, manufacturer, farmer, or skilled worker for wages, lives the life of a good citizen and good neighbor; who believes loyally and with all his heart in his country's institutions, and in the underlying principles on which these institutions are built; who directs both his private and his public life by sound principles; who cherishes high ideals; and who aims to train his children for a useful life and for their country's service."

This modest and sensible statement indicates the existence of a national point of view. We have developed in the course of time, as a result of certain racial inheritances and historic experiences, a national "temper" or "ethos"; a more or less settled way of considering intellectual, moral, and social problems; in short, a peculiarly national attitude toward the universal human questions.

In a narrower sense, "the American mind" may mean the characteristics of the American intelligence, as it has been studied by Mr. Bryce, De Tocqueville, and other trained observers of our methods of thinking. It may mean the specific achievements of the American intelligence in fields like science and scholarship and history. In all these particular departments of intellectual activity the methods and the results of American workers have recently received expert and by no means uniformly favorable assessment from investigators upon both sides of the Atlantic. But the observer of literary processes and productions must necessarily take a somewhat broader survey of national tendencies. He must study what Nathaniel Hawthorne, with the instinct of a romance writer, preferred to call the "heart" as distinguished from the mere intellect. He must watch the moral and social and imaginative impulses of the individual; the desire for beauty; the hunger for self-expression; the conscious as well as the unconscious revelation of personality; and he must bring all this into relation—if he can, and knowing that the finer secrets are sure to elude him!—with the age-long impulses of the

race and with the mysterious tides of feeling that flood or ebb with the changing fortunes of the nation.

One way to begin to understand the typical American is to take a look at him in Europe. It does not require a professional beggar or a licensed guide to identify him. Not that the American in Europe need recall in any particular the familiar pictorial caricature of "Uncle Sam." He need not bear any outward resemblances to such stage types as that presented in "The Man From Home." He need not even suggest, by peculiarities of speech or manner, that he has escaped from the pages of those novels of international observation in which Mr. James and Mr. Howells long ago attained an unmatched artistry. Our "American Abroad," at the present hour, may be studied without the aid of any literary recollections whatever. There he is, with his wife and daughters, and one may stare at him with all the frankness of a compatriot. He is obviously well-to-do,—else he would not be there at all,—and the wife and daughters seem very well-to-do indeed. He is kindly; considerate —sometimes effusively considerate—of his

fellow travellers; patient with the ladies of his family, who in turn are noticeably patient with him. He is genial — very willing to talk with polyglot headwaiters and chauffeurs; in fact the wife and daughters are also practised conversationalists, although their most loyal admirers must admit that their voices *are* a trifle sharp or flat. These ladies are more widely read than "papa." He has not had much leisure for Ruskin and Symonds and Ferrero. His lack of historical training limits his curiosity concerning certain phases of his European surroundings; but he uses his eyes well upon such general objects as trains, hotel-service, and Englishmen. In spite of his habitual geniality, he is rather critical of foreign ways, although this is partly due to his lack of acquaintance with them. Intellectually, he is really more modest and self-distrustful than his conversation or perhaps his general bearing would imply; in fact, his wife and daughters, emboldened very likely by the training of their women's clubs, have a more commendable daring in assaulting new intellectual positions.

Yet the American does not lack quickness, either of wits or emotion. His humor and sen-

timent make him an entertaining companion. Even when his spirits run low, his patriotism is sure to mount in proportion, and he can always tell you with enthusiasm in just how many days he expects to be back again in what he calls "God's country."

This, or something like this, is the "American" whom the European regards with curiosity, contempt, admiration, or envy, as the case may be, but who is incontestably modifying Western Europe, even if he is not, as many journalists and globe-trotters are fond of asserting, "Americanizing" the world. Interesting as it is to glance at him against that European background which adds picturesqueness to his qualities, the "Man from Home" is still more interesting in his native habitat. There he has been visited by hundreds of curious and observant foreigners, who have left on record a whole literature of bewildered and bewildering, irritating and flattering and amusing testimony concerning the Americans. Settlers like Crèvecœur in the glowing dawn of the Republic, poets like Tom Moore, novelists like Charles Dickens,—other novelists like Mr. Arnold Bennett,—professional travellers like Captain Basil Hall,

students of contemporary sociology like Paul Bourget and Mr. H. G. Wells, French journalists, German professors, Italian admirers of Colonel Roosevelt, political theorists like De Tocqueville, profound and friendly observers like Mr. Bryce, have had, and will continue to have, their say.

The reader who tries to take all this testimony at its face value, and to reconcile its contradictions, will be a candidate for the insane asylum. Yet the testimony is too amusing to be neglected and some of it is far too important to be ignored. Mr. John Graham Brooks, after long familiarity with these foreign opinions of America, has gathered some of the most representative of them into a delightful and stimulating volume entitled *As Others See Us*. There one may find examples of what the foreigner has seen, or imagined he has seen, during his sojourn in America, and what he has said about it afterwards. Mr. Brooks is too charitable to our visitors to quote the most fantastic and highly colored of their observations; but what remains is sufficiently bizarre.

The real service of such a volume is to train us in discounting the remarks made about us in

a particular period like the eighteen-thirties, or from observations made in a special place, like Newport, or under special circumstances, like a Bishop's private car. It helps us to make allowances for the inevitable angle of nationality, the equally inevitable personal equation. A recent ambitious book on America, by a Washington journalist of long residence here, although of foreign birth, declares that "the chief trait of the American people is the love of gain and the desire of wealth acquired through commerce." That is the opinion of an expert observer, who has had extraordinary chances for seeing precisely what he has seen. I think it, notwithstanding, a preposterous opinion, fully as preposterous as Professor Muensterberg's notion that America has latterly grown more monarchical in its tendencies, — but I must remember that, in my own case, as in that of the journalist under consideration, there are allowances to be made for race, and training, and natural idiosyncracy of vision.

The native American, it may be well to remember, is something of an observer himself. If his observations upon the characteristics of his countrymen are less piquant than the

foreigner's, it is chiefly because the American writes, upon the whole, less incisively than he talks. But incisive native writing about American traits is not lacking. If a missionary, say in South Africa, has read the New York *Nation* every week for the past forty years, he has had an extraordinary "moving picture" of American tendencies, as interpreted by independent, trenchant, and high-minded criticism. That a file of the *Nation* will convey precisely the same impression of American tendencies as a file of the *Sun*, for instance, or the *Boston Evening Transcript*, is not to be affirmed. The humor of the London *Punch* and the New York *Life* does not differ more radically than the aspects of American civilization as viewed by two rival journals in Newspaper Row. The complexity of the material now collected and presented in daily journalism is so great that adequate editorial interpretation is obviously impossible. All the more insistently does this heterogeneous picture of American life demand the impartial interpretation of the historian, the imaginative transcription of the novelist. Humorist and moralist, preacher and mob orator and social essayist, shop-talk and talk over the

tea-cup or over the pipe, and the far more illuminating instruction of events, are fashioning day by day the infinitely delicate processes of our national self-assessment. Scholars like Mr. Henry Adams or Mr. James Ford Rhodes will explain to us American life as it was during the administrations of Jefferson or in the eighteen-fifties. Professor Turner will expound the significance of the frontier in American history. Mr. Henry James will portray with unrivalled psychological insight the Europeanized American of the eighteen-seventies and eighties. Literary critics like Professor Wendell or Professor Trent will deduce from our literature itself evidence concerning this or that national quality; and all this mass of American expert testimony, itself a result and a proof of national self-awareness and self-respect, must be put into the scales to balance, to confirm, or to outweigh the reports furnished by foreigners.

I do not pretend to be able, like an expert accountant, to draw up a balance-sheet of national qualities, to credit or debit the American character with this or that precise quantity of excellence or defect. But having turned the pages of many books about the United States,

and listened to many conversations about its inhabitants in many states of the Union, I venture to collect a brief list of the qualities which have been assigned to us, together with a few, but not, I trust, too many, of our admitted national defects.

Like that excellent German who wrote the History of the English Drama in six volumes, I begin with Physical Geography. The differentiation of the physical characteristics of our branch of the English race is admittedly due, in part, to climate. In spite of the immense range of climatic variations as one passes from New England to New Orleans, from the Mississippi Valley to the high plains of the Far West, or from the rainy Oregon belt southward to San Diego, the settlers of English stock find a prevalent atmospheric condition, as a result of which they begin, in a generation or two, to change in physique. They grow thinner and more nervous, they "lean forward," as has been admirably said of them, while the Englishman "leans back"; they are less heavy and less steady; their voices are higher, sharper; their athletes get more easily "on edge"; they respond, in short, to an exces-

sively stimulating climate. An old-fashioned sea-captain put it all into a sentence when he said that he could drink a bottle of wine with his dinner in Liverpool and only a half a bottle in New York. Explain the cause as we may, the fact seems to be that the body of John Bull changes, in the United States, into the body of Uncle Sam.

There are mental differences no less pronounced. No adjective has been more frequently applied to the Anglo-Saxon than the word "dull." The American mind has been accused of ignorance, superficiality, levity, commonplaceness, and dozens of other defects, but "dulness" is not one of them. "Smartness," rather, is the preferred epithet of derogation; or, to rise a little in the scale of valuation, it is the word "cleverness," used with that lurking contempt for cleverness which is truly English and which long survived in the dialect of New England, where the village ne'er-do-well or Jack-of-all-trades used to be pronounced a "clever" fellow. The variety of employments to which the American pioneers were obliged to betake themselves has done something, no doubt, to produce a national versatility, a quick

assimilation of new methods and notions, a ready adaptability to novel emergencies. An invaluable pioneer trait is curiosity; the settler in a new country, like Moses in the wilderness of Arabia, must "turn aside to see"; he must look into things, learn to read signs, — or else the Indians or frost or freshet will soon put an end to his pioneering. That curiosity concerning strangers which so much irritated Dickens and Mrs. Trollope was natural to the children of Western emigrants to whom the difference between Sioux and Pawnee had once meant life or death. "What's your business, stranger, in these parts?" was an instinctive, because it had once been a vital, question. That it degenerates into mere inquisitiveness is true enough; just as the "acuteness," the "awareness," essential to the existence of one generation becomes only "cuteness," the typical tin-pedler's habit of mind, in the generation following.

American inexperience, the national rawness and unsophistication which has impressed so many observers, has likewise its double significance when viewed historically. We have exhibited, no doubt, the amateurishness and recklessness which spring from relative isola-

tion, from ignorance as to how they manage elsewhere this particular sort of thing,— the conservation of forests, let us say, or the government of colonial dependencies. National smugness and conceit, the impatience crystallized in the phrase, "What have we got to do with abroad?" have jarred upon the nerves of many cultivated Americans. But it is no less true that a nation of pioneers and settlers, like the isolated individual, learns certain rough-and-ready Robinson Crusoe ways of getting things done. A California mining-camp is sure to establish law and order in due time, though never, perhaps, a law and order quite according to Blackstone. In the most trying crises of American political history, it was not, after all, a question of profiting by European experience. Washington and Lincoln, in their sorest struggles, had nothing to do with "abroad"; the problem had first to be thought through, and then fought through, in American and not in European terms. Not a half-dozen Englishmen understood the bearings of the Kansas-Nebraska Bill, or, if they did, we were little the wiser. We had to wait until a slow-minded frontier lawyer mastered it in all its implica-

tions, and then patiently explained it to the farmers of Illinois, to the United States, and to the world.

It is true that the unsophisticated mode of procedure may turn out to be sheer folly, — a "sixteen to one" triumph of provincial barbarism. But sometimes it is the secret of freshness and of force. Your cross-country runner scorns the highway, but that is because he has confidence in his legs and loins, and he likes to take the fences. Fenimore Cooper, when he began to write stories, knew nothing about the art of novel-making as practised in Europe, but he possessed something infinitely better for him, namely, instinct, and he took the right road to the climax of a narrative as unerringly as the homing bee follows its viewless trail.

No one can be unaware how easily this superb American confidence may turn to overconfidence, to sheer recklessness. We love to run past the signals, in our railroading and in our thinking. Emerson will "plunge" on a new idea as serenely as any stock-gambler ever "plunged" in Wall Street, and a pretty schoolteacher will tell you that she has become an

advocate of the "New Thought" as complacently as an old financier will boast of having bought Calumet and Hecla when it was selling at 25. (Perhaps the school-teacher may get as good a bargain. I cannot say.) Upon the whole, Americans back individual guesswork and pay cheerfully when they lose. A great many of them, as it happens, have guessed right. Even those who continue to guess wrong, like Colonel Sellers, have the indefeasible romantic appetite for guessing again. The American temperament and the chances of American history have brought constant temptation to speculation, and plenty of our people prefer to gamble upon what they love to call a "proposition," rather than to go to the bottom of the facts. They would rather speculate than know.

Doubtless there are purely physical causes that have encouraged this mental attitude, such as the apparently inexhaustible resources of a newly opened country, the consciousness of youthful energy, the feeling that any very radical mistake in pitching camp to-day can easily be rectified when we pitch camp to-morrow. The habit of exaggeration which

was so particularly annoying to English visitors in the middle of the last century — annoying even to Charles Dickens, who was himself something of an expert in exuberance — is a physical and moral no less than a mental quality. That monstrous braggadocio which Dickens properly satirized in *Martin Chuzzlewit* was partly, of course, the product of provincial ignorance. Doubtless there were, and there are still, plenty of Pograms who are convinced that Henry Clay and Daniel Webster overtop all the intellectual giants of the Old World. But that youthful bragging, and perhaps some of the later bragging as well, has its social side. It is a perverted idealism. It springs from group loyalty, from sectional fidelity. The settlement of "Eden" may be precisely what Dickens drew it: a miasmatic mud-hole. Yet we who are interested in the new town do not intend, as the popular phrase has it, "to give ourselves away." We back our own "proposition," so that to this day Chicago cannot tell the truth to St. Louis, nor Harvard to Yale. Braggadocio thus gets glorified through its rootage in loyalty; and likewise extravagance — surely one of the worst

of American mental vices — is often based upon a romantic confidence in individual opinion or in the righteousness of some specific cause. Convince a blue-blooded American like Wendell Phillips that the abolition of slavery is right, and, straightway, words and even facts become to him mere weapons in a splendid warfare. His statements grow rhetorical, reckless, virulent. Proof seems to him, as it did to the contemporary Transcendentalist philosophers, an impertinence. The sole question is, "Are you on the Lord's side?" i.e., on the side of Wendell Phillips.

Excuse as we may the faults of a gifted combatant in a moral crisis like the abolition controversy, the fact remains that the intellectual dangers of the oratorical temperament are typically American. What is commonly called our "Fourth of July" period has indeed passed away. It has few apologists, perhaps fewer than it really deserves. It is possible to regret the disappearance of that old-fashioned assertion of patriotism and pride, and to question whether historical pageants and a "noiseless Fourth" will develop any better citizens than the fathers were. But on

the purely intellectual side, the influence of that spread-eagle oratory was disastrous. Throughout wide-extended regions of the country, and particularly in the South and West, the "orator" grew to be, in the popular mind, the normal representative of intellectual ability. Words, rather than things, climbed into the saddle. Popular assemblies were taught the vocabulary and the logic of passion, rather than of sober, lucid reasoning. The "stump" grew more potent than schoolhouse and church and bench; and it taught its reckless and passionate ways to more than one generation. The intellectual leaders of the newer South have more than once suffered ostracism for protesting against this glorification of mere oratory. But it is not the South alone that has suffered. Wherever a mob can gather, there are still the dangers of the old demagogic vocabulary and rhetoric. The mob state of mind is lurking still in the excitable American temperament.

The intellectual temptations of that temperament are revealed no less in our popular journalism. This journalism, it is needless to say, is extremely able, but it is reckless to the last

degree. The extravagance of its head-lines and the over-statements of its news columns are direct sources of profit, since they increase the circulation and it is circulation which wins advertising space. I think it is fair to say that the American people, as a whole, like precisely the sort of journalism which they get. The tastes of the dwellers in cities control, more and more, the character of our newspapers. The journals of New York, Chicago, and San Francisco are steadily gaining in circulation, in resourcefulness, and in public spirit, but they are, for the most part, unscrupulous in attack, sophistical, and passionate. They outvie the popular pulpit in sentimentality. They play with fire.

The note of exaggeration which is heard in American oratory and journalism is struck again in the popular magazines. Their compaign of "exposure," during the last decade, has been careless of individual and corporate rights and reputations. Even the magazine sketches and short stories are keyed up to a hysteric pitch. So universally is this characteristic national tension displayed in our periodical literature that no one is much surprised to

read in his morning paper that some one has called the President of the United States a liar, —or that some one has been called a liar by the President of the United States.

For an explanation of these defects, shall we fall back upon a convenient maxim of De Tocqueville's and admit with him that "a democracy is unsuited to meditation"? We are forced to do so. But then comes the inevitable second thought that a democracy must needs have other things than meditation to attend to. Athenian and Florentine and Versailles types of political despotism have all proved highly favorable to the lucubrations of philosophers and men of letters who enjoyed the despot's approbation. For that matter, no scheme of life was ever better suited to meditation than an Indian reservation in the eighteen-seventies, with a Great Father in Washington to furnish blankets, flour, and tobacco. Yet that is not quite the American ideal of existence, and it even failed to produce the peaceable fruits of meditation in the Indian himself.

One may freely admit the shortcomings of the American intelligence; the "commonness of mind and tone" which Mr Bryce believes

to be inseparable from the presence of such masses of men associated under modern democratic government; the frivolity and extravagance which represent the gasconading of the romantic temper in face of the grey practicalities of everyday routine; the provincial boastfulness and bad taste which have resulted from intellectual isolation; the lack, in short, of a code, whether for thought or speech or behavior. And nevertheless, one's instinctive Americanism replies, May it not be better, after all, to have gone without a code for a while, to have lacked that orderly and methodized and socialized European intelligence, and to have had the glorious sense of bringing things to pass in spite of it? There is just one thing that would have been fatal to our democracy. It is the feeling expressed in La Bruyère's famous book: "Everything has been said, everything has been written, everything has been done." Here in America everything was to do; we were forced to conjugate our verbs in the future tense. No doubt our existence has been, in some respects, one of barbarism, but it has been the barbarism of life and not of death. A rawboned baby sprawling on the mud floor

of a Kentucky log cabin is a more hopeful spectacle than a wholly civilized funeral.

"Perhaps it is," rejoins the European critic, somewhat impatiently, "but you are confusing the issue. We find certain grave defects in the American mind, defects which, if you had not had what Thomas Carlyle called 'a great deal of land for a very few people,' would long ago have involved you in disaster. You admit the mental defects, but you promptly shift the question to one of moral qualities, of practical energy, of subduing your wilderness, and so forth. You have too often absented yourself from the wedding banquet, from the European symposium of wit and philosophy, from the polished and orderly and delightful play and interplay of civilized mind,—and your excuse is the old one: that you are trying your yoke of oxen and cannot come. We charge you with intellectual sins, and you enter the plea of moral preoccupation. If you will permit personal examples, you Americans have made ere now your national heroes out of men whose reasoning powers remained those of a college sophomore, who were unable to state an opponent's position with fairness, who lacked wholly

the judicial quality, who were vainglorious and extravagant, who had, in short, the mind of an exuberant barbarian; but you instantly forget their intellectual defects in the presence of their abounding physical and moral energy, their freedom from any taint of personal corruption, their whole-souled desire and effort for the public good. Were not such heroes, impossible as they would have been in any other civilized country, perfectly illuminative of your national state of mind?"

For one, I confess that I do not know what reply to make to my imaginary European critic. I suspect that he is right. At any rate, we stand here at the fork of the road. If we do not wish to linger any longer over a catalogue of intellectual sins, let us turn frankly to our moral preoccupations, comforting ourselves, if we like, as we abandon the field of purely intellectual rivalry with Europe, in the reflection that it is the muddle-headed Anglo-Saxon, after all, who is the dominant force in the modern world.

The moral temper of the American people has been analyzed no less frequently than their mental traits. Foreign and native observers are alike agreed in their recognition of the extra-

ordinary American energy. The sheer power of the American bodily machine, driven by the American will, is magnificent. It is often driven too hard, and with reckless disregard of anything save immediate results. It wears out more quickly than the bodily machine of the Englishman. It is typical that the best distance runners of Great Britain usually beat ours, while we beat them in the sprints. Our public men are frequently — as the athletes say — "all in" at sixty. Their energy is exhausted at just the time that many an English statesman begins his best public service. But after making every allowance for wasteful excess, for the restless and impatient consumption of nervous forces which nature intended that we should hold in reserve, the fact remains that American history has demonstrated the existence of a dynamic national energy, physical and moral, which is still unabated. Immigration has turned hitherward the feet of millions upon millions of young men from the hardiest stocks of Europe. They replenish the slackening streams of vigor. When the northern New Englander cannot make a living on the old farm, the French Canadian takes it off his hands, and not only improves

the farm, but raises big crops of boys. So with Italians, Swedes, Germans, Irish, Jews, and Portuguese, and all the rest. We are a nation of immigrants, a digging, hewing, building, breeding, bettering race, of mixed blood and varying creeds, but of fundamental faith in the wages of going on; a race compounded of materials crude but potent; raw, but with blood that is red and bones that are big; a race that is accomplishing its vital tasks, and, little by little, transmuting brute forces and material energies into the finer play of mind and spirit.

From the very beginning, the American people have been characterized by idealism. It was the inner light of Pilgrim and Quaker colonists; it gleams no less in the faces of the children of Russian Jew immigrants to-day. American irreverence has been noted by many a foreign critic, but there are certain subjects in whose presence our reckless or cynical speech is hushed. Compared with current Continental humor, our characteristic American humor is peculiarly reverent. The purity of woman and the reality of religion are not considered topics for jocosity. Cleanness of body and of mind are held by our young men to be not only desirable

but attainable virtues. There is among us, in comparison with France or Germany, a defective reverence for the State as such; and a positive irreverence towards the laws of the Commonwealth, and towards the occupants of high political positions. Mayor, Judge, Governor, Senator, or even President, may be the butt of such indecorous ridicule as shocks or disgusts the foreigner; but nevertheless the personal joke stops short of certain topics which Puritan tradition disapproves. The United States is properly called a Christian nation, not merely because the Supreme Court has so affirmed it, but because the phrase "a Christian nation" expresses the historical form which the religious idealism of the country has made its own. The Bible is still considered, by the mass of the people, a sacred book; oaths in courts of law, oaths of persons elected to great office, are administered upon it. American faith in education, as all the world knows, has from the beginning gone hand in hand with faith in religion; the school-house was almost as sacred a symbol as the meeting-house; and the munificence of American private benefactions to the cause of education furnishes to-

day one of the most striking instances of idealism in the history of civilization.

The ideal passions of patriotism, of liberty, of loyalty to home and section, of humanitarian and missionary effort, have all burned with a clear flame in the United States. The optimism which lies so deeply embedded in the American character is one phase of the national mind. Charles Eliot Norton once said to me, with his dry humor, that there was an infallible test of the American authorship of any anonymous article or essay: "Does it contain the phrase 'After all, we need not despair'? If it does, it was written by an American." In spite of all that is said about the practicality of the American, his love of gain and his absorption in material interests, those who really know him are aware how habitually he confronts his practical tasks in a spirit of romantic enthusiasm. He marches downtown to his prosaic day's job and calls it "playing the game"; to work as hard as he can is to "get into the game," and to work as long as he can is to "stay in the game"; he loves to win fully as much as the Jew and he hates to lose fully as much as the Englishman, but

losing or winning, he carries into his business activity the mood of the idealist.

It is easy to think of all this as self-deception; as the emotional effusiveness of the American temperament; but to refuse to see its idealism is to mistake fundamentally the character of the American man. No doubt he does deceive himself often as to his real motives: he is a mystic and a bargain-hunter by turns. Divided aims, confused ideals, have struggled for the mastery among us, ever since Challon's *Voyage*, in 1606, announced that the purpose of the first colonists to Virginia was "both to seek to convert the savages, as also to seek out what benefits or commodities might be had in those parts." How that "both" — "as also" keeps echoing in American history: "both" to christianize the Negro and work him at a profit, "both" duty and advantage in retaining the Philippines; "both" international good will and increased armaments; "both" Sunday morning precepts and Monday morning practice; "both" horns of a dilemma; "both God and mammon"; did ever a nation possess a more marvellous water-tight compartment method of believing

and honoring opposites! But in all this unconscious hypocrisy the American is perhaps not worse — though he may be more absurd! — than other men.

Another aspect of the American mind is found in our radicalism. "To be an American," it has been declared, "is to be a radical." That statement needs qualification. Intellectually the American is inclined to radical views; he is willing to push certain social theories very far; he will found a new religion, a new philosophy, a new socialistic community, at the slightest notice or provocation; but he has at bottom a fund of moral and political conservatism. Thomas Jefferson, one of the greatest of our radical idealists, had a good deal of the English squire in him after all. Jeffersonianism endures, not merely because it is a radical theory of human nature, but because it expresses certain facts of human nature. The American mind looks forward, not back; but in practical details of land, taxes, and governmental machinery we are instinctively cautious of change. The State of Connecticut knows that her constitution is ill adapted to the present conditions of her population, but the dif-

ficulty is to persuade the rural legislators to amend it. Yet everybody admits that amendment will come "some day." This admission is a characteristic note of American feeling; and every now and then come what we call "uplift" movements, when radicalism is in the very air, and a thousand good "causes" take fresh vigor.

One such period was in the New England of the eighteen-forties. We are moving in a similar — only this time a national — current of radicalism, to-day. But a change in the weather or the crops has before now turned many of our citizens from radicalism into conservatism. There is, in fact, conservatism in our blood and radicalism in our brains, and now one and now the other rules. Very typical of American radicalism is that story of the old sea-captain who was ignorant, as was supposed, of the science of navigation, and who cheerfully defended himself by saying that he could work his vessel down to Boston Light without knowing any navigation, and after that he could go where he "dum pleased." I suspect the old fellow pulled his sextant and chronometer out of his chest as soon as he

really needed them. American radicalism is not always as innocent of the world's experience as it looks. In fact, one of the most interesting phases of this twentieth century "uplift" movement is its respect and even glorification of expert opinion. A German expert in city-planning electrifies an audience of Chicago club-women by talking to them about drains, ash-carts, and flower-beds. A hundred other experts, in sanitation, hygiene, chemistry, conservation of natural resources, government by commission, tariffs, arbitration treaties, are talking quite as busily; and they have the attention of a national audience that is listening with genuine modesty, and with a real desire to refashion American life on wiser and nobler plans. In this national forward movement in which we are living, radicalism has shown its beneficent aspect of constructive idealism.

No catalogue of American qualities and defects can exclude the trait of individualism. We exalt character over institutions, says Mr. Brownell; we like our institutions because they suit us, and not because we admire institutions. "Produce great persons," declares Walt Whit-

man, "the rest follows." Whether the rest follows or not, there can be no question that Americans, from the beginning, have laid singular stress upon personal qualities. The religion and philosophy of the Puritans were in this respect at one with the gospel of the frontier. It was the principle of "every man for himself"; solitary confrontation of his God, solitary struggle with the wilderness. "He that will not work," declared John Smith after that first disastrous winter at Jamestown, "neither let him eat." The pioneer must clear his own land, harvest his own crops, defend his own fireside; his temporal and eternal salvation were strictly his own affair. He asked, and expected, no aid from the community; he could at most "change works" in time of harvest, with a neighbor, if he had one. It was the sternest school of self-reliance, from babyhood to the grave, that human society is ever likely to witness. It bred heroes and cranks and hermits; its glories and its eccentricities are written in the pages of Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman; they are written more permanently still in the instinctive American faith in individual manhood.

Our democracy idolizes a few individuals; it ignores their defective training, or, it may be, their defective culture; it likes to think of an Andrew Jackson who was a "lawyer, judge, planter, merchant, general, and politician," before he became President; it asks only that the man shall not change his individual character in passing from one occupation or position to another; in fact, it is amused and proud to think of Grant hauling cordwood to market, of Lincoln keeping store or Roosevelt rounding-up cattle. The one essential question was put by Hawthorne into the mouth of Holgrave in the *House of the Seven Gables*. Holgrave had been by turns a schoolmaster, clerk in a store, editor, pedler, lecturer on Mesmerism, and daguerreotypist, but "amid all these personal vicissitudes," says Hawthorne, "he had never lost his identity. . . . He had never violated the innermost man, but had carried his conscience along with him." There speaks the local accent of Puritanism, but the voice insisting upon the moral integrity of the individual is the undertone of America.

Finally, and surely not the least notable of American traits, is public spirit. Triumphant

individualism checks itself, or is rudely checked in spite of itself, by considerations of the general good. How often have French critics confessed, with humiliation, that in spite of the superior socialization of the French intelligence, France has yet to learn from America the art and habit of devoting individual fortunes to the good of the community. Our American literature, as has been already pointed out, is characteristically a citizen literature, responsive to the civic note, the production of men who, like the writers of the *Federalist*, applied a vigorous practical intelligence, a robust common sense, to questions affecting the interest of everybody. The spirit of fair play in our free democracy has led Americans to ask not merely what is right and just for one, the individual, but what are righteousness and justice and fair play for all. Democracy, as embodied in such a leader as Lincoln, has meant Fellowship. Nothing finer can be said of a representative American than to say of him, as Mr. Norton said of Mr. Lowell, that he had a "most public soul."

No one can present such a catalogue of American qualities as I have attempted without

realizing how much escapes his classification. Conscious criticism and assessment of national characteristics is essential to an understanding of them; but one feels somehow that the net is not holding. The analysis of English racial inheritances, as modified by historical conditions, yields much, no doubt; but what are we to say of such magnificent embodiments of the American spirit as are revealed in the Swiss immigrant Agassiz, the German exile Carl Schurz, the native-born mulatto Booker Washington? The Americanism of representative Americans is something which must be felt; it is to be reached by imaginative perception and sympathy, no less than by the process of formal analysis. It would puzzle the experts in racial tendencies to find arithmetically the common denominator of such American figures as Franklin, Washington, Jackson, Webster, Lee, Lincoln, Emerson, and "Mark Twain"; yet the countrymen of those typical Americans instinctively recognize in them a sort of largeness, genuineness, naturalness, kindliness, humor, effectiveness, idealism, which are indubitably and fundamentally American.

There are certain sentiments of which we

ourselves are conscious, though we can scarcely translate them into words, and these vaguely felt emotions of admiration, of effort, of fellowship and social faith are the invisible America. Take, for a single example, the national admiration for what we call a "self-made" man: here is a boy selling candy and newspapers on a Michigan Central train; he makes up his mind to be a lawyer; in twelve years from that day he is general counsel for the Michigan Central road; he enters the Senate of the United States and becomes one of its leading figures. The instinctive flush of sympathy and pride with which Americans listen to such a story is far more deeply based than any vulgar admiration for money-making abilities. No one cares whether such a man is rich or poor. He has vindicated anew the possibilities of manhood under American conditions of opportunity; the miracle of our faith has in him come true once more.

No one can understand America with his brains. It is too big, too puzzling. It tempts, and it deceives. But many an illiterate immigrant has felt the true America in his pulses before he ever crossed the Atlantic. The descendant of the Pilgrims still remains ignorant

of our national life if he does not respond to its glorious zest, its throbbing energy, its forward urge, its uncomprehending belief in the future, its sense of the fresh and mighty world just beyond to-day's horizon. Whitman's "Pioneers, O Pioneers" is one of the truest of American poems because it beats with the pulse of this onward movement, because it is full of this laughing and conquering fellowship and of undefeated faith.

American Idealism

Our endeavor to state the general characteristics of the American mind has already given us some indication of what Americans really care for. The things or the qualities which they like, the objects of their conscious or unconscious striving, are their ideals. "There is what I call the American idea," said Theodore Parker in the Anti-Slavery Convention of 1850. "This idea demands, as the proximate organization thereof, a democracy — that is, a government of all the people, by all the people, for all the people; of course, a government on the principle of eternal justice, the unchanging law of God; for shortness' sake, I will call it the idea of Freedom." That is one of a thousand definitions of American idealism. Books devoted to the "Spirit of America" — like the volume by Henry van Dyke which bears that very title — give a programme of

national accomplishments and aspirations. But our immediate task is more specific. It is to point out how adequately this idealistic side of the national temperament has been expressed in American writing. Has our literature kept equal pace with our thinking and feeling?

We do not need, in attempting to answer this question, any definition of idealism, in its philosophical or in its more purely literary sense. There are certain fundamental human sentiments which lift men above brutes, Frenchmen above "frog-eaters," and Englishmen above "shop-keepers." These ennobling sentiments or ideals, while universal in their essential nature, assume in each civilized nation a somewhat specific coloring. The national literature reveals the myriad shades and hues of private and public feeling, and the more truthful this literary record, the more delicate and noble become the harmonies of local and national thought or emotion with the universal instincts and passions of mankind. On the other hand, when the literature of Spain, for instance, or of Italy, fails, within a given period, in range and depth of human interest, we are compelled to believe either that the Spain or

Italy of that age was wanting in the nobler ideals, or that it lacked literary interpretation.

In the case of America we are confronted by a similar dilemma. Since the beginning of the seventeenth century this country has been, in a peculiar sense, the home of idealism; but our literature has remained through long periods thin and provincial, barren in cosmopolitan significance; and the hard fact faces us to-day that only three or four of our writers have aroused any strong interest in the cultivated readers of continental Europe. Evidently, then, either the torch of American idealism does not burn as brightly as we think, or else our writers, with but few exceptions, have not hitherto possessed the height and reach and grasp to hold up the torch so that the world could see it. Let us look first at the flame, and then at the torch-bearers.

Readers of Carlyle have often been touched by the humility with which that disinherited child of Calvinism speaks of Goethe's doctrine of the "Three Reverences," as set forth in *Wilhelm Meister*. Again and again, in his correspondence and his essays, does Carlyle recur to that teaching of the threefold Reverence:

Reverence for what is above us, for what is around us and for what is under us; that is to say, the ethnic religion which frees us from debasing fear, the philosophical religion which unites us with our comrades, and the Christian religion which recognizes humility and poverty and suffering as divine.

"To which of these religions do you specially adhere?" inquired Wilhelm.

"To all the three," replied the sages; "for in their union they produce what may properly be called the true Religion. Out of those three Reverences springs the highest Reverence, Reverence for Oneself."

An admirable symbolism, surely; vaguer, no doubt, than the old symbols which Carlyle had learned in the Kirk at Ecclefechan, but less vague, in turn, than that doctrine of reverence for the Oversoul, which was soon to be taught at Concord.

As one meditates upon the idealism of the first colonists in America, one is tempted to ask what their "reverences" were. Toward what tangible symbols of the invisible did their eyes instinctively turn?

For New England, at least, the answer is

relatively simple. One form of it is contained in John Adams's well-known prescription for Virginia, as recorded in his *Diary* for July 21, 1786. "Major Langbourne dined with us again. He was lamenting the difference of character between Virginia and New England. I offered to give him a receipt for making a New England in Virginia. He desired it; and I recommended to him town-meetings, training-days, town-schools, and ministers."

The "ministers," it will be noticed, come last on the Adams list. But the order of precedence is unimportant.

Here are four symbols, or, if you like, "reverences." Might not the Virginia planters, loyal to their own specific symbol of the "gentleman," — no unworthy ideal, surely; one that had been glorified in European literature ever since Castiligione wrote his *Courtier*, and one that had been transplanted from England to Virginia as soon as Sir Walter Raleigh's men set foot on the soil which took its name from the Virgin Queen, — might not the Virginia gentlemen have pondered to their profit over the blunt suggestion of the Massachusetts commoner? No doubt; and yet how much pictur-

esqueness and nobility — and tragedy, too — we should have missed, if our history had not been full of these varying symbols, clashing ideals, different Reverences!

One Reverence, at least, was common to the Englishman of Virginia and to the Englishman of Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay. They were joint heirs of the Reformation, children of that waxing and puissant England which was a nation of one book, the Bible; a book whose phrases color alike the *Faerie Queen* of Spenser and the essays of Francis Bacon; a book rich beyond all others in human experience; full of poetry, history, drama; the test of conduct; the manual of devotion; and above all, and blinding all other considerations by the very splendor of the thought, a book believed to be the veritable Word of the unseen God. For these colonists in the wilderness, as for the Protestant Europe which they had left irrevocably behind them, the Bible was the plainest of all symbols of idealism: it was the first of the "Reverences."

The Church was a symbol likewise, but to the greater portion of colonial America the Church meant chiefly the tangible band of

militant believers within the limits of a certain township or parish, rather than the mystical Bride of Christ. Except in Maryland and Virginia, whither the older forms of Church worship were early transplanted, there was scanty reverence for the Establishment. There was neither clergyman nor minister on board the Mayflower. In Rufus Choate's oration on the Pilgrims before the New England Society of New York in 1843, occurred the famous sentence about "a church without a bishop and a state without a King"; to which Dr. Wainwright, rector of St. John's, replied wittily at the dinner following the oration that there "can be no church without a bishop." This is perhaps a question for experts; but Thomas Hooker, Thomas Shepard, and John Cotton would have sided with Rufus Choate. The awe which had once been paid to the Establishment was transferred, in the seventeenth-century New England, to the minister. The minister imposed himself upon the popular imagination, partly through sheer force of personal ascendency, and partly as a symbol of the theocracy, — the actual governing of the Commonwealth by the laws and spirit of the sterner Scriptures.

The minister dwelt apart as upon an awful Sinai. It was no mere romantic fancy of Hawthorne that shadowed his countenance with a black veil. The church organization, too, — though it may have lacked its bishop, — had a despotic power over its communicants; to be cast out of its fellowship involved social and political consequences comparable to those following excommunication by the Church of Rome. Hawthorne and Whittier and Longfellow — all of them sound antiquarians, though none of them in sympathy with the theology of Puritanism — have described in fit terms the bareness of the New England meeting-house. What intellectual severity and strain was there; what prodigality of learning; what blazing intensity of devotion; what pathos of women's patience, and of children, prematurely old, stretched upon the rack of insoluble problems! What dramas of the soul were played through to the end in those barn-like buildings, where the musket, perhaps, stood in the corner of the pew! "How aweful is this place!" must have been murmured by the lips of all; though there were many who have added, "This is the gate of Heaven."

The gentler side of colonial religion is winningly portrayed in Whittier's *Pennsylvania Pilgrim* and in his imaginary journal of Margaret Smith. There were sunnier slopes, warmer exposures for the ripening of the human spirit, in the Southern colonies. Even in New England there was sporadic revolt from the beginning. The number of non-church-members increased rapidly after 1700; Franklin as a youth in Boston admired Cotton Mather's ability, but he did not go to church, "Sunday being my studying day." Doubtless there were always humorous sceptics like Mrs. Stowe's delightful Sam Lawson in *Oldtown Folks*. Lawson's comment on Parson Simpson's service epitomizes two centuries of New England thinking. "Wal," said Sam, "Parson Simpson's a smart man; but I tell ye, it 's kind o' discouragin'. Why, he said our state and condition by natur was just like this. We was clear down in a well fifty feet deep, and the sides all round nothin' but glare ice; but we was under immediate obligations to get out, 'cause we was free, voluntary agents. But nobody ever had got out, and nobody would, unless the Lord reached down and took 'em. And whether he would or not

nobody could tell; it was all sovereignty. He said there wan't one in a hundred, not one in a thousand, — not one in ten thousand, — that would be saved. Lordy massy, says I to myself, ef that 's so they 're any of 'em welcome to my chance. *And so I kind o' ris up and come out.*"

Mrs. Stowe's novel is fairly representative of a great mass of derivative literature which draws its materials from the meeting-house period of American history. But the direct literature of that period has passed almost wholly into oblivion. Jonathan Edwards had one of the finest minds of his century; no European standard of comparison is too high for him; he belongs with Pascal, with Augustine, if you like, with Dante. But his great treatises written in the Stockbridge woods are known only to a few technical students of philosophy. One terrible sermon, preached at Enfield in 1741, is still read by the curious; but scarcely anybody knows of the ineffable tenderness, dignity, and pathos of his farewell sermon to his flock at Northampton: and the Yale Library possesses nearly twelve hundred of Edwards's sermons which have never been printed at all. Nor does anybody, save here and there an antiquarian, read

Shepard and Hooker and Mayhew. And yet these preachers and their successors furnished the emotional equivalents of great prose and verse to generations of men. "That is poetry," says Professor Saintsbury (in a dangerous latitudinarianism, perhaps!), "which gives the reader the feeling of poetry." Here we touch one of the fundamental characteristics of our national state of mind, in its relation to literature. We are careless of form and type, yet we crave the emotional stimulus. Milton, greatest of Puritan poets, was read and quoted all too seldom in the Puritan colonies, and yet those colonists were no strangers to the emotions of sublimity and awe and beauty. They found them in the meeting-house instead of in a book; precisely as, in a later day, millions of Americans experienced what was for them the emotional equivalent of poetry in the sermons of Henry Ward Beecher and Phillips Brooks. French pulpit oratory of the seventeenth century wins recognition as a distinct type of literature; its great practitioners, like Massillon, Bourdaloue, Bossuet, are appraised in all the histories of the national literature and in books devoted to the evolution of literary species. In

the American colonies the great preachers performed the functions of men of letters without knowing it. They have been treated with too scant respect in the histories of American literature. It is one of the penalties of Protestantism that the audiences, after a while, outgrow the preacher. The development of the historic sense, of criticism, of science, makes an impassable gulf between Jonathan Edwards and the American churches of the twentieth century. A sense of profound changes in theology has left our contemporaries indifferent to the literature in which the old theology was clothed.

There is one department of American literary production, of which Bossuet's famous sermon on Queen Henrietta Maria of England may serve to remind us, which illustrates significantly the national idealism. I mean the commemorative oration. The addresses upon the Pilgrim Fathers by such orators as Everett, Webster, and Choate; the countless orations before such organizations as the New England Society of New York and the Phi Beta Kappa; the papers read before historical and patriotic societies; the birthday and centenary discourses

upon national figures like Washington or Lincoln, have all performed, and are still performing, an inestimable service in stimulating popular loyalty to the idealism of the fathers. As literature, most of this production is derivative: we listen to eloquence about the Puritans, but we do not read the Puritans; the description of Arthur Dimmesdale's election sermon in *The Scarlet Letter*, moving as it may be, tempts no one to open the stout collections of election sermons in the libraries. Yet the original literature of mediæval chivalry is known only to a few scholars: Tennyson's *Idylls* outsell the *Mabinogion* and Malory. The actual world of literature is always shop-worn; a world chiefly of second-hand books, of warmed-over emotions; and it is not surprising that many listeners to orations about Lincoln do not personally emulate Lincoln, and that many of the most enthusiastic dealers in the sentiment of the ancestral meeting-house do not themselves attend church.

The other ingredients of John Adams's ideal Commonwealth are no less significant of our national disposition. Take the school-house. It was planted in the wilderness for the training

of boys and girls and for a future "godly and learned ministry." The record of American education is a long story of idealism which has touched literature at every turn. The "red school-house" on the hill-top or at the cross-roads, the "log-colleges" in forgotten hamlets, the universities founded by great states, are all a record of the American faith — which has sometimes been called a fetich — in education. In its origin, it was a part of the essential programme of Calvinism to make a man able to judge for himself upon the most momentous questions; a programme, too, of that political democracy which lay embedded in the tenets of Calvinism, a democracy which believes and must continue to believe that an educated electorate can safeguard its own interests and train up its own leaders. The poetry of the American school-house was written long ago by Whittier, in describing Joshua Coffin's school under the big elm on the cross-road in East Haverhill; its humor and pathos and drama have been portrayed by innumerable story-writers and essayists. Mrs. Martha Baker Dunn's charming sketches, entitled "Cicero in Maine" and "Virgil in Maine," indicate the idealism once taught

in the old rural academies, — and it is taught there still. City men will stop wistfully on the street, in the first week of September, to watch the boys and girls go trudging off to their first day of school; men who believe in nothing else at least believe in that! And school and college and university remain, as in the beginning, the first garden-ground and the last refuge of literature.

That "town-meeting" which John Adams thought Virginia might do well to adopt has likewise become a symbol of American idealism. Together with the training-day, it represented the rights and duties and privileges of free men; the machinery of self-government. It was democracy, rather than "representative" government, under its purest aspect. Sentiments of responsibility to the town, the political unit, and to the Commonwealth, the group of units, were bred there. Likewise, it was a training-school for sententious speech and weighty action; its roots, as historians love to demonstrate, run back very far; and though the modern drift to cities has made its machinery ineffective in the larger communities, it remains a perpetual spring or feeding stream to the broader cur-

rents of our national life. Without an understanding of the town-meeting and its equivalents, our political literature loses much of its significance. Like the school-house and meeting-house, it has become glorified by our men of letters. John Fiske and other historians have celebrated it in some of the most brilliant pages of our political writing; and that citizen literature, so deeply characteristic of us, found in the plain, forthright, and public-spirited tone of town-meeting discussions its keynote. The spectacular debates of our national history, the dramatic contests in the great arena of the Senate Chamber, the discussions before huge popular audiences in the West, have maintained the civic point of view, have developed and dignified and enriched the prose style first employed by American freemen in deciding their local affairs in the presence of their neighbors. "I am a part of this people," said Lincoln proudly in one of his famous debates of 1858; "I was raised just a little east of here"; and this nearness to the audience, this directness and simplicity and genuineness of our best political literature, its homely persuasiveness and force, is an inheritance of the town-meeting.

Bible and meeting-house, school-house and town-meeting, thus illustrate concretely the responsiveness of the American character to idealistic impulses. They are external symbols of a certain state of mind. It may indeed be urged that they are primarily signs of a moral and social or institutional trend, and are therefore non-literary evidence of American idealism. Nevertheless, institutional as they may be deemed, they lie close to that poetry of daily duty in which our literature has not been poor. They are fundamentally related to that attitude of mind, that habitual temper of the spirit, which has produced, in all countries of settled use and wont, the literature of idealism. Brunetière said of Flaubert's most famous woman character that poor Emma Bovary, the prey and the victim of Romantic desires, was after all much like the rest of us except that she lacked the intelligence to perceive the charm and poetry of the daily task. We have already touched upon the purely romantic side of American energy and of American imagination, and we must shortly look more closely still at those impulses of daring, those moods of heightened feeling, that intensified individ-

ualism, the quest of strangeness and terror and wild beauty, which characterize our romantic writing. But this romanticism is, as it were, a segment of the larger circle of idealism. It is idealism accentuated by certain factors, driven to self-expression by the passions of scorn or of desire; it exceeds, in one way or another, the normal range of experience and emotion. Our romantic American literature is doubtless our greatest. And yet some of the most characteristic tendencies of American writing are to be found in the poetry of daily experience, in the quiet accustomed light that falls upon one's own doorway and garden, in the immemorial charm of going forth to one's labor and returning in the evening, — poetry old as the world.

Let us see how this glow of idealism touches some of the more intimate aspects of human experience. "Out of the three Reverences," says Wilhelm Meister, "springs the highest Reverence, Reverence for Oneself." Open the pages of Hawthorne. Moving wholly within the framework of established institutions, with no desire to shatter the existing scheme of social order, choosing as its heroes men of the

meeting-house, town-meeting, and training-day, how intensely nevertheless does the imagination of this fiction-writer illuminate the Body and the Soul!

Take first the Body. The inheritance of English Puritanism may be traced throughout our American writing, in its reverence for physical purity. The result is something unique in literary history. Continental critics, while recognizing the intellectual and artistic powers revealed in *The Scarlet Letter*, have seldom realized the awfulness, to the Puritan mind, of the very thought of an adulterous minister. That a priest in southern Europe should break his vows is indeed scandalous; but the sin is regarded as a failure of the natural man to keep a vow requiring supernatural grace for its fulfilment; it may be that the priest had no vocation for his sacred office; he is unfrocked, punished, forgotten, yet a certain mantle of human charity still covers his offence. But in the Puritan scheme (and *The Scarlet Letter*, save for that one treacherous, warm human moment in the woodland where "all was spoken," lies wholly within the set framework of Puritanism) there is no forgiveness for a sin of the

flesh. There is only Law, Law stretching on into infinitude until the mind shudders at it. Hawthorne knew his Protestant New England through and through. *The Scarlet Letter* is the most striking example in our national literature of that idealization of physical purity, but hundreds of other romances and poems, less morbid if less great, assert in unmistakable terms the same moral conviction, the same ideal.

Yet, in spite of its theme, there was never a less adulterous novel than this book which plays so artistically with the letter A. The body is branded, is consumed, is at last, perhaps, transfigured by the intense rays of light emitted from the suffering soul.

"The soul is form and doth the body make."

In this intense preoccupation with the Soul, Hawthorne's romance is in unison with the more mystical and spiritual utterances of Catholicism as well as of Protestantism. It was in part a resultant of that early American isolation which contributed so effectively to the artistic setting of *The Scarlet Letter*. But in his doctrine of spiritual integrity, in the agonized utterance, "Be true — be true!" as well as in

his reverence for purity of the body, our greatest romancer was typical of the imaginative literature of his countrymen. The restless artistic experiments of Poe presented the human body in many a ghastly and terrifying aspect of illness and decay, and distorted by all passions save one. His imagination was singularly sexless. Pathological students have pointed out the relation between this characteristic of Poe's writing, and his known tendencies toward opium-eating, alcoholism, and tuberculosis. But no such explanation is at hand to elucidate the absence of sexual passion from the novels of the masculine-minded Fenimore Cooper. One may say, indeed, that Cooper's novels, like Scott's, lack intensity of spiritual vision; that their tone is consonant with the views of a sound Church of England parson in the eighteenth century; and that the absence of physical passion, like the absence of purely spiritual insight, betrays a certain defect in Cooper's imaginative grasp and depth. But it is better criticism, after all, to remember that these three pioneers in American fiction-writing were composing for an audience in which Puritan traditions or tastes were predominant. Not one of the three men

but would have instantly sacrificed an artistic effect, legitimate in the eyes of Fielding or Goethe or Balzac, rather than — in the phrase so often satirized — "bring a blush to the cheek of innocence." In other words, the presence of a specific audience, accustomed to certain Anglo-Saxon and Puritanic restraint of topic and of speech, has from the beginning of our imaginative literature coöperated with the instinct of our writers. That Victorian reticence which is so plainly seen even in such full-bodied writers as Dickens or Thackeray — a reticence which men like Mr. Bernard Shaw and Mr. Galsworthy and Mr. Wells think so hypocritical and dangerous to society and which they have certainly done their utmost to abolish — has hitherto dominated our American writing. The contemporary influence of great Continental writers to whom reticence is unknown, combined with the influence of a contemporary opera and drama to which reticence would be unprofitable, are now assaulting this dominant convention. Very possibly it is doomed. But it is only within recent years that its rule has been questioned.

One result of it may, I think, be fairly ad-

mitted. While very few writers of eminence, after all, in any country, wish to bring a "blush to the cheek of innocence," they naturally wish, as Thackeray put it in one of the best-known of his utterances, to be permitted to depict a man to the utmost of their power. American literary conventions, like English conventions, have now and again laid a restraining and compelling hand upon the legitimate exercise of this artistic instinct; and this fact has coöperated with many social, ethical, and perhaps physiological causes to produce a thinness or bloodlessness in our books. They are graceful, pleasing, but pale, like one of those cool whitish uncertain skies of an American spring. They lack "body," like certain wines. It is not often that we can produce a real Burgundy. We have had many distinguished fiction-writers, but none with the physical gusto of a Fielding, a Smollett, or even a Dickens, who, idealist and romanticist as he was, and Victorian as were his artistic preferences, has this animal life which tingles upon every page. We must confess that there is a certain quality of American idealism which is covertly suspicious or openly hostile to the glories of bodily sensation. Emerson's thin

high shoulders peep up reproachfully above the desk; Lanier is playing his reproachful flute; Longfellow reads Frémont's Rocky Mountain experiences while lying abed, and sighs "But, ah, the discomforts!"; Irving's *Astoria*, superb as were the possibilities of its physical background, tastes like parlor exploration. Even Dana's *Before the Mast* and Parkman's *Oregon Trail*, transcripts of robust actual experience, and admirable books, reveal a sort of physical paleness compared with Turgenieff's *Notes of a Sportsman* and Tolstoï's *Sketches* of Sebastopol and the Crimea. They are Harvard undergraduate writing, after all!

These facts illustrate anew that standing temptation of the critic of American literature to palliate literary shortcomings by the plea that we possess certain admirable non-literary qualities. The dominant idealism of the nation has levied, or seemed to levy, a certain tax upon our writing. Some instincts, natural to the full-blooded utterance of Continental literature, have been starved or eliminated here. Very well. The characteristic American retort to this assertion would be: Better our long record and habit of idealism than a few masterpieces more or less. As a

people, we have cheerfully accepted the Puritan restraint of speech, we have respected the shamefaced conventions of decent and social utterance. Like the men and women described in Locker-Lampson's verses, Americans

> "eat, and drink, and scheme, and plod,—
> They go to church on Sunday;
> And many are afraid of God—
> And more of Mrs. Grundy."

Now Mrs. Grundy is assuredly not the most desirable of literary divinities, but the student of classical literature can easily think of other divinities, celebrated in exquisite Greek and Roman verse, who are distinctly less desirable still.

"Not passion, but sentiment," said Hawthorne, in a familiar passage of criticism of his own *Twice-Told Tales*. How often must the student of American literature echo that half-melancholy but just verdict, as he surveys the transition from the spiritual intensity of a few of our earlier writers to the sentimental qualities which have brought popular recognition to the many. Take the word "soul" itself. Calvinism shadowed and darkened the meaning, perhaps, and yet its spiritual passion made the word "soul" sublime. The reaction against Calvin-

ism has made religion more human, natural, and possibly more Christlike, but "soul" has lost the thrilling solemnity with which Edwards pronounced the word. Emerson and Hawthorne, far as they had escaped from the bonds of their ancestral religion, still utter the word "soul" with awe. But in the popular sermon and hymn and story of our day, — with their search after the sympathetic and the sentimental, after what is called in magazine slang "heart-interest," — the word has lost both its intellectual distinction and its literary magic. It will regain neither until it is pronounced once more with spiritual passion.

But in literature, as in other things, we must take what we can get. The great mass of our American writing is sentimental, because it has been produced by, and for, an excessively sentimental people. The poems in Stedman's carefully chosen *Anthology*, the prose and verse in the two volume Stedman-Hutchinson collection of American Literature, the Library of Southern Literature, and similar sectional anthologies, the school Readers and Speakers, — particularly in the half-century between 1830 and 1880, — our newspapers and maga-

zines, — particularly the so-called "yellow" newspapers and the illustrated magazines typified by *Harper's Monthly*,—are all fairly dripping with sentiment. American oratory is notoriously the most sentimental oratory of the civilized world. The *Congressional Record* still presents such specimens of sentiment — delivered or given leave to be printed, it is true, for "home consumption" rather than to affect the course of legislation — as are inexplicable to an Englishman or a Frenchman or an Italian.

Immigrants as we all are, and migratory as we have ever been, — so much so that one rarely meets an American who was born in the house built by his grandfather, — we cling with peculiar fondness to the sentiment of "Home." The best-known American poem, for decades, was Samuel Woodworth's "Old Oaken Bucket," the favorite popular song was Stephen Foster's "My Old Kentucky Home," the favorite play was Denman Thompson's "Old Homestead." Without that appealing word "mother" the American melodrama would be robbed of its fifth act. Without pictures of "the child" the illustrated magazines would go into bankruptcy. No country has witnessed

such a production of periodicals and books for boys and girls: France and Germany imitate in vain *The Youth's Companion* and *St. Nicholas*, as they did the stories of "Oliver Optic" and *Little Women* and *Little Lord Fauntleroy*.

The sentimental attitude towards women and children, which is one of the most typical aspects of American idealism, is constantly illustrated in our short stories. Bret Harte, disciple of Dickens as he was, and Romantic as was his fashion of dressing up his miners and gamblers, was accurately faithful to the American feeling towards the "kid" and the "woman." "Tennessee's Partner," "The Luck of Roaring Camp," "Christmas at Sandy Bar," are obvious examples. Owen Wister's stories are equally faithful and admirable in this matter. The American girl still does astonishing things in international novels, as she has continued to do since the eighteen-sixties, but they are astonishing mainly to the European eye and against the conventionalized European background. She does the same things at home, and neither she nor her mother sees why she should not, so universal among us is the chivalrous interpretation of actions and situations

which amaze the European observer. The popular American literature which recognizes and encourages this position of the "young girl" in our social structure is a literature primarily of sentiment. The note of passion — in the European sense of that word — jars and shatters it. The imported "problem-play," written for an adult public in Paris or London, introduces social facts and intellectual elements almost wholly alien to the experience of American matinée audiences. Disillusioned historians of our literature have instanced this unsophistication as a proof of our national inexperience; yet it is often a sort of radiant and triumphant unsophistication which does not lose its innocence in parting with its ignorance.

That sentimental idealization of classes, whether peasant, bourgeois, or aristocratic, which has long been a feature of Continental and English poetry and fiction, is practically absent from American literature. Whatever the future may bring, there have hitherto been no fixed classes in American society. Webster was guilty of no exaggeration when he declared that the whole North was made up of laborers, and Lincoln spoke in the same terms in his

well-known sentences about "hired laborers": "twenty-five years ago I was a hired laborer." The relative uniformity of economic and social conditions, which prevailed until toward the close of the nineteenth century, made, no doubt, for the happiness of the greatest number, but it failed, naturally, to afford that picturesqueness of class contrast and to stimulate that sentiment of class distinction, in which European literature is so rich.

Very interesting, in the light of contemporary economic conditions, is the effort made by American poets in the middle of the last century to glorify labor. They were not so much idealizing a particular laboring class, as endeavoring, in Whitman's words, "To teach the average man the glory of his walk and trade." Whitman himself sketched the American workman in almost every attitude which appealed to his own sense of the picturesque and heroic. But years before *Leaves of Grass* was published, Whittier had celebrated in his *Songs of Labor* the glorified images of lumberman and drover, shoemaker and fisherman. Lucy Larcom and the authors of *The Lowell Offering* portrayed the fine idealism of the young women — of the

best American stock — who went enthusiastically to work in the cotton-mills of Lowell and Lawrence, or who bound shoes by their own firesides on the Essex County farms. That glow of enthusiasm for labor was chiefly moral, but it was poetical as well. The changes which have come over the economic and social life of America are nowhere more sharply indicated than in that very valley of the Merrimac where, sixty and seventy years ago, one could "hear America singing." There are few who are singing today in the cotton-mills; the operators, instead of girls from the hill-farms, are Greeks, Lithuanians, Armenians, Italians. Whittier's drovers have gone forever; the lumbermen and deep-sea fishermen have grown fewer, and the men who still swing the axes and haul the frozen cod-lines are mostly aliens. The pride that once broke into singing has turned harsh and silent. "Labor" looms vast upon the future political and social horizon, but the songs of labor have lost the lyric note. They have turned into the dramas and tragedies of labor, as portrayed with the swift and fierce insistence of the short story, illustrated by the Kodak. In the great agricultural sections of the West and South the

old bucolic sentiment still survives,—that simple joy of seeing the "frost upon the pumpkin" and "the fodder in the stock" which Mr. James Whitcomb Riley has sung with such charming fidelity to the type. But even on the Western farms toil has grown less manual. It is more a matter of expert handling of machinery. Reaping and binding may still have their poet, but he needs to be a Kipling rather than a Burns.

Our literature, then, reveals few traces of idealization of a class, and but little idealization of trades or callings. Neither class nor calling presents anything permanent to the American imagination, or stands for anything ultimate in American experience. On the other hand, our writing is rich in local sentiment and sectional loyalty. The short story, which has seized so greedily the more dramatic aspects of American energy, has been equally true to the quiet background of rural scenery and familiar ways. American idealism, as shown in the transformation of the lesser loyalties of home and countryside into the larger loyalties of state and section, and the absorption of these, in turn, into the emotions of nationalism, is particularly illustrated in our political verse. A striking

example of the imaginative visualization of the political units of a state is the spirited roll-call of the counties in Whittier's "Massachusetts to Virginia." But the burden of that fine poem, after all, is the essential unity of Massachusetts as a sovereign state, girding herself to repel the attack of another sovereign state, Virginia. Now the evolution of our political history, both local and national, has tended steadily, for half a century, to the obliteration, for purposes of the imagination, of county lines within state lines. At the last Republican state convention held in Massachusetts, there were no county banners displayed, for the first time in half a century. Many a city-dweller to-day cannot tell in what county he is living unless he has happened to make a transfer of real estate. State lines themselves are fading away. The federal idea has triumphed. Doubtless the majority of the fellow citizens of John Randolph of Roanoke were all the more proud of him because the poet could say of him, in writing an admiring and mournful epitaph:—

"Beyond Virginia's border line
His patriotism perished."

The great collections of Civil War verse, which

are lying almost unread in the libraries, are storehouses of this ancient state pride and jealousy, which was absorbed so fatally into the larger sectional antagonism. "Maryland, my Maryland" gave place to "Dixie," just as Whittier's "Massachusetts to Virginia" was forgotten when marching men began to sing "John Brown's Body" and "The Battle Hymn of the Republic." The literature of sectionalism still lingers in its more lovable aspect in the verse and fiction which still celebrates the fairer side of the civilization of the Old South: its ideals of chivalry and local loyalty, its gracious women and gallant men. Our literature needs to cultivate this provincial affection for the past, as an offset to the barren uniformity which the federal scheme allows. But the ultimate imaginative victory, like the actual political victory of the Civil War, is with the thought and feeling of Nationalism. It is foreshadowed in that passionate lyric cry of Lowell, which sums up so much and, like all true passion, anticipates so much: —

"O Beautiful! my Country!"

The literary record of American idealism thus illustrates how deeply the conception of

Nationalism has affected the imagination of our countrymen. The literary record of the American conception of liberty runs further back. Some historians have allowed themselves to think that the American notion of liberty is essentially declamatory, a sort of futile echo of Patrick Henry's "Give me Liberty or give me Death"; and not only declamatory, but hopelessly theoretical and abstract. They grant that it was a trumpet-note, no doubt, for agitators against the Stamp Act, and for pamphleteers like Thomas Paine; that it may have been a torch for lighting dark and weary ways in the Revolutionary War; but they believe it likewise to be a torch which gleams with the fire caught from France and which was passed back to France in turn when her own great bonfire was ready for lighting. The facts, however, are inconsistent with this picturesque theory of contemporary reactionists. It is true that the word "liberty" has been full of temptation for generations of American orators, that it has become an idol of the forum, and often a source of heat rather than of light. But to treat American Liberty as if she habitually wore the red cap is to nourish a Francophobia as

absurd as Edmund Burke's. The sober truth is that the American working theory of Liberty is singularly like St. Paul's. "Ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh." A few sentences from John Winthrop, written in 1645, are significant: "There is a twofold liberty, natural . . . and civil or federal. The first is common to man with beasts and other creatures. By this, man, as he stands in relation to man simply, hath liberty to do what he lists; it is a liberty to evil as well as to good. This liberty is incompatible and inconsistent with authority. . . . The other kind of liberty I call civil or federal, it may also be termed moral. . . . This liberty is the proper end and object of authority, and cannot subsist without it; and it is a liberty to that only which is good, just, and honest. This liberty you are to stand for, with the hazard (not only of your goods, but) of your lives, if need be. . . . This liberty is maintained and exercised in a way of subjection to authority; it is of the same kind of liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free."

There speaks the governor, the man of affairs, the typical citizen of the future republic. The

liberty to do as one pleases is a dream of the Renaissance; but out of dreamland it does not work. Nobody, even in revolutionary France, imagines that it will work. Jefferson, who is popularly supposed to derive his notion of liberty from French theorists, is to all practical purposes nearer to John Winthrop than he is to Rousseau. The splendid phrases of his "Declaration" are sometimes characterized as abstractions. They are really generalizations from past political experience. An arbitrary king, assuming a liberty to do as he liked, had encroached upon the long-standing customs and authority of the colonists. Jefferson, at the bidding of the Continental Congress, served notice of the royal trespass, and incidentally produced (as Lincoln said) a "standard maxim for free society."

It is true, no doubt, that the word "liberty" became in Jefferson's day, and later, a mere partisan or national shibboleth, standing for no reality, degraded to a catchword, a symbol of antagonism to Great Britain. In the political debates and the impressive prose and verse of the anti-slavery struggle, the word became once more charged with vital meaning; it glowed under the heat and pressure of an idea. Towards

the end of the nineteenth century it went temporarily out of fashion. The late Colonel Higginson, an ideal type of what Europeans call an "1848" man, attended at the close of the century some sessions of the American Historical Association. In his own address, at the closing dinner, he remarked that there was one word for which he had listened in vain during the reading of the papers by the younger men. It was the word "liberty." One of the younger school retorted promptly that since we had the thing liberty, we had no need to glorify the word. But Colonel Higginson, stanch adherent as he was of the "good old cause," was not convinced. Like many another lover of American letters, he thought that William Vaughn Moody's "Ode in Time of Hesitation" deserved a place by the side of Lowell's "Commemoration Ode," and that when the ultimate day of reckoning comes for the whole muddled Imperialistic business, the standard of reckoning must be "liberty" as Winthrop and Jefferson and Lincoln and Lowell and Vaughn Moody understood the word.

In the mean time we must confess that the history of our literature, with a few noble excep-

tions, shows a surprising defect in the passion for freedom. Tennyson's famous lines about "Freedom broadening slowly down from precedent to precedent" are perfectly American in their conservative tone; while it is Englishmen like Byron and Landor and Shelley and Swinburne who have written the most magnificent republican poetry. The "land of the free" turns to the monarchic mother country, after all, for the glow and thunder and splendor of the poetry of freedom. It is one of the most curious phenomena in the history of literature. Shall we enter the preoccupation plea once more? Enjoying the thing liberty, have we been therefore less concerned with the idea? Or is it simply another illustration of the defective passion of American literature?

Yet there is one phase of political loyalty which has been cherished by the imagination of Americans, and which has inspired noteworthy oratory and noble political prose. It is the sentiment of Union. In one sense, of course, this dates back to the period of Franklin's *bon mot* about our all hanging together, or hanging separately. It is found in Hamilton's pamphlets, in Paine's *Crisis*, in the *Federalist*, in Washing-

ton's "Farewell Address." It is peculiarly associated with the name and fame of Daniel Webster, and, to a less degree, with the career of Henry Clay. In the stress of the debate over slavery, many a Northerner with abolitionist convictions, like the majority of Southerners with slave-holding convictions, forgot the splendid peroration of Webster's "Reply to Hayne" and were willing to "let the Union go." But in the four tragic and heroic years that followed the firing upon the American flag at Fort Sumter the sentiment of Union was made sacred by such sacrifices as the patriotic imagination of a Clay or a Webster had never dreamed. A new literature resulted. A lofty ideal of indissoluble Union was preached in pulpits, pleaded for in editorials, sung in lyrics, and woven into the web of fiction. Edward Everett Hale's *Man Without a Country* became one of the most poignantly moving of American stories. In Walt Whitman's *Drum-Taps* and his later poems, the "Union of these States" became transfigured with mystical significance: no longer a mere political compact, dissoluble at will, but a spiritual entity, a new incarnation of the soul of man.

We must deal later with that American instinct of fellowship which Whitman believed to have been finally cemented by the Civil War, and which has such import for the future of our democracy. There are likewise communal loyalties, glowing with the new idealism which has come with the twentieth century: ethical, municipal, industrial, and artistic movements which are full of promise for the higher life of the country, but which have not yet had time to express themselves adequately in literature. There are stirrings of racial loyalty among this and that element of our composite population, — as for instance among the gifted younger generation of American Jews, — a racial loyalty not antagonistic to the American current of ideas, but rather in full unison with it. Internationalism itself furnishes motives for the activity of the noblest imaginations, and the true literature of internationalism has hardly yet begun. It is in the play and counterplay of these new forces that the American literature of the twentieth century must measure itself. Communal feelings novel to Americans bred under the accepted individualism will doubtless assert themselves in our prose and verse. But it is to be

remembered that the best writing thus far produced on American soil has been a result of the old conditions: of the old "Reverences"; of the pioneer training of mind and body; of the slow tempering of the American spirit into an obstinate idealism. We do not know what course the ship may take in the future, but

> "We know what Master laid thy keel,
> What Workman wrought thy ribs of steel,
> Who made each mast and sail and rope,
> What anvil rang, what hammers beat,
> In what a forge and what a heat
> Were shaped the anchors of thy hope!"